

WASHINGTON, DC-Today, Congressman Earl Blumenauer (D-OR), the co-chair and founder of the Congressional Army Corps Reform Caucus and member of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, issued the following statement on the reauthorization of the Water Resources Development Act and reform of the Army Corps of Engineers:

"Although I am disappointed that the WRDA bill that the Transportation Committee passed earlier this week does not address the serious and well-documented flaws within the Corps planning process, I appreciate that the leadership of the Committee has pledged to allow us to have a debate on these important issues when the bill reaches the House Floor.

"In recent years, several government and private studies, including those done by the National Academy of Sciences, the General Accounting Office, and the Army Inspector General, have found that the Corps project process is often biased in favor of large construction projects that completely change the hydrology of entire river systems. They have also found that the Corps often lacks adequate environmental safeguards in its planning process and has at times manipulated data to secure approval for major projects.

"While I do think that the evidence is clear about these problems, I am inclined to give the Corps the benefit of the doubt. The issue is more with Congress and the signals we send and projects we approve. It is no longer good enough to "do no harm" to the environment with Corps projects. We must consider the entire costs and consequences of the projects, both economically and environmentally.

"I am convinced that policy changes such as subjecting certain projects to independent review, updating the Corps' principles and guidelines, ensuring mitigation, and providing incentives for communities to plan, will save tax dollars, help the Corps provide the most efficient and environmentally friendly solutions to water resources challenges, and will restore trust in the planning process of the Army Corps of Engineers. I believe we can do this without delaying the study or construction of valuable projects."

Early in the 107th Congress, Congressman Blumenauer formed the bipartisan Corps Reform Caucus. The Caucus provides a forum for Members to share their common concerns about the Army Corps of Engineers' projects and policies, and particularly to examine the financial accountability and record of environmental protection of the Army Corps.